

## Critical Reading and Primary Sources

Before reading any passage, review and assess the following: When the document was probably written? Who wrote the document, What was the purpose for writing the document? What is the style or tone of the writing?

To answer the above questions you will have to look at your textbook, other sources, notes, and make some inferences.

Read the passages attached and answer the questions.

### In Praise of Epicurus

1. When was this written?
2. Who was the writer?
3. What is the context wherein this was written?
4. Why was it written?
5. What is the tone or style of writing?

### Passage

1.
  - a. Who is the brightest star of the Greek race to whom Lucretius refers?
  - b. Who is the swallow that cannot rival the swan?
2. What happens to the terrors of the mind when Epicurus proclaims aloud his philosophy?
3. Describe Lucretius's view of the gods
4. What does Lucretius mean when he says that the quarters of Acheron (the underworld) are nowhere to be seen?
5. Although Epicurus preached the avoidance of excesses, several passages in this selection are excessive in their praise of him. In what way?

## IN PRAISE OF EPICURUS

The following selection is from the writings of Lucretius, a Roman poet who lived during the first century B.C. Lucretius based his great work, *On the Nature of Things*, on the philosophy of Epicurus (page 155). In the following excerpt, Lucretius praises Epicurus.

Thou, who out of deep darkness didst first avail  
to raise a torch so clear, shedding light upon the  
true joys of life, 'tis thee I follow, bright star of  
the Greek race, and in thy deepset prints firmly  
now I plant my footsteps, not in eager emulation,  
but rather because for love I long to copy thee.  
For how could a swallow rival swans, or what  
might kids with trembling limbs accomplish in a  
race to compare with the stout strength of a  
horse? Thou art our father, thou discoverer of  
truth, thou dost vouchsafe to us a father's pre-  
cepts. From thy pages, our hero, even as bees in  
flowery glades sip every plant, we in like manner  
browse on all thy sayings of gold, yea, of gold,  
and always most worthy of life for evermore. For  
as soon as thy philosophy, springing from thy  
godlike soul, begins to proclaim aloud the nature  
of things, the terrors of the mind fly away, the  
walls of the world part asunder, and I see things

moving on through all the void. The majesty of  
the gods is revealed, and their peaceful abodes,  
which neither the winds shake nor clouds soak  
with showers, nor does the snow congealed with  
biting frost besmirch them with its white fall,  
but an ever cloudless sky vaults them over, and  
smiles with light bounteously spread abroad.  
Moreover, nature supplies all they need, nor does  
anything gnaw at their peace of mind at any  
time. But on the other hand, the quarters of Ach-  
eron [the underworld] are nowhere to be seen,  
nor yet is earth a barrier to prevent all things  
being observed, which are carried on underneath  
through the void below our feet. At these things,  
as it were, some godlike pleasure and a thrill of  
awe seizes on me, to think that thus by thy  
power nature is made so clear and manifest, laid  
bare to sight on every side.

## Epistles of Paul

1. Who is Paul?
2. When (approximately) was this document written?
3. In what context was the document written? In other words what was going on around this period that may have led to this writing?
4. Why did Paul write it?
5. What the tone or style of writing?

## The Passage

6. Whom does Paul say is the highest Power?
7.
  - a. Who are “the powers that be”?
  - b. By whom are they ordained?
8. In what verse does Paul advise Christians to obey rulers not only for fear of punishment but also for the sake of living a good life?
9. Explain the meaning of verse 7 as it would apply to a Roman citizen living at the time of Paul

## THE EPISTLES OF PAUL

Paul's letters to churches throughout the empire form a large part of the New Testament. The following selection is from Romans, Chapter 13, Verses 1–9. In this excerpt, Paul entreats Christians to obey their earthly rulers and to live through good works.

1. Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be ordained of God.
2. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation.
3. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? Do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same.
4. For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil.
5. Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience's sake.
6. For, this cause pay ye tribute also: for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing.
7. Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor.
8. Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another has fulfilled the law.
9. For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.

## The City of God

1. When was this written?
2. Who was the writer?
3. What is the context in which this writing was created, ie. What were the ongoing historical events of this period?
4. Why was it written?
5. What is the tone or style of the author?

## The passage

1. What reward did God grant the pagan heroes of Rome?
2. What is a pagan?
3. Why do these heroes have no right to complain about God's justice
4. According to Augustine, who are the saints?
5. What rewards to saints receive in the City of God?
6. According to Augustine, if saints are rewarded in the Eternal City, does it matter that Rome, an earthy empire, fell? Explain your answer.

## THE CITY OF GOD

St. Augustine (354–430), a leading Christian thinker and bishop of Hippo in Africa wrote *The City of God* after Rome was sacked in 410. Opponents of the Church claimed that the destruction of the city occurred because Christianity neglected the pagan gods who traditionally protected Rome. In the following excerpt from Book 5, St. Augustine describes a heavenly city that, unlike Rome, can never fall.

For those pagan heroes there was not to be the divine grace of everlasting life along with His holy angels in His heavenly City, for the only road to this Society of the Blessed is true piety, that religious service . . . which is offered to the One true God. On the other hand, if God did not grant them at least the temporal [earthly] glory of a splendid Empire, there would have been no reward for the praiseworthy efforts or virtues by which they strove to attain that glory. When our Lord said: "Amen I say to you they have received their reward," He had in mind those who do what seems to be good in order to be glorified by men.

After all, the pagans subordinated their private property to the common welfare, that is, to the republic and the public treasury. . . . They gave their counsel freely in the councils of the state. They indulged in neither public crime nor private passion. They thought they were on the right road when they strove, by all these means, for honors, rule, and glory. Honor has come to

them from almost all peoples. The rule of their laws has been imposed on many peoples. And in our day, in literature and in history, glory has been given them by almost everyone. They have no right to complain of the justice of the true and supreme God. "They have received their just reward."

The reward of the saints is altogether different. They were men who, while on earth, suffered reproaches for the City of God which is so much hated by the lovers of this world. That City is eternal. There, no one is born because no one dies. There, there reigns that true and perfect happiness which is not a goddess, but a gift of God—toward whose beauty we can but sigh in our pilgrimage on earth, though we hold the pledge of it by faith. In that City, the sun does not "rise upon the good and bad" for the Sun of Justice cherishes the good alone. There, where the Truth is a treasure shared by all, there is no need to pinch the poor to fill the coffers of the state.